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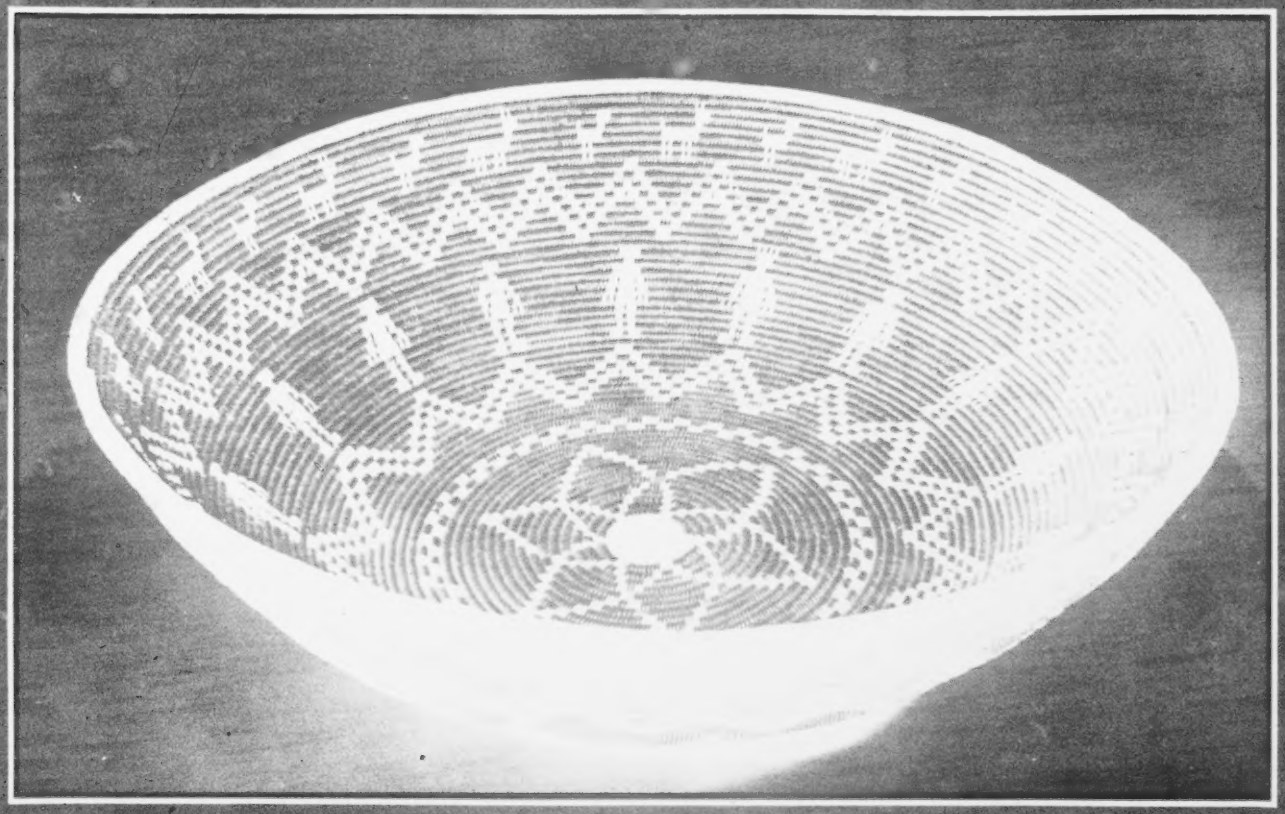
General

NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN BASKETS



LOWE ART MUSEUM / UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
SEPTEMBER 20, 1973 – JANUARY 27, 1974

NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN BASKETS

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SEPTEMBER 20, 1973 - JANUARY 27, 1974

INFORMATION

MUSEUM HOURS: Monday through Friday, 12 noon to 5 p.m. (offices open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.); Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

MUSEUM INFORMATION: Telephone 305-284-3535; write to the Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, 1301 Miller Drive, Coral Gables, Florida 33146.

ADMISSION FREE: Guided tours by volunteer docents are available. Please call ten days in advance.

MUSEUM STAFF: John J. Baratte, Director; Paul E. Thompsen, Assistant Director; Ms. Anita Richards, Assistant to the Director; Ms. Carol Hotchkiss, Registrar; Mrs. Nancy Krantz, Museum Secretary; Mrs. Janice Schweighardt, Assistant Museum Secretary; Mrs. Kathryn Holliday, Membership Secretary and Receptionist; Elliott Stringer, Building Superintendent; Gerald Chungo, Installation Engineer.

EXHIBITIONS: The Beaux Arts, the Friends of Art and General Membership fees provide a major portion of the funds necessary to support Lowe Art Museum exhibitions.

Catalog information prepared by Carol Hotchkiss; edited and designed by Paul E. Thompson; photographs by University of Miami Photo Center.

COVER:

11. UTILITY BOWL, West Apache (Central Arizona); coil method, 30" diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mr. Alfred I. Barton.

Preface

One of the more important physical manifestations of North American Indian cultures has been the basket. Carrying items from one place to another, whether from water source to teepee or over hundreds of miles, required containers. Some were hollowed-out vegetation, others of woven fibers, or perhaps built of clay. But the basket was universal. Every known Indian nation made and used baskets, in one form or another. Food-gatherers carried grain, fisherman their catch, horsemen their hunting implements or food.

Whatever their size, shape, decoration or purpose, these baskets give us a glimpse of another time and attitude. And because Americans have become so aware of their own artistic heritage within recent years, and I include the history and artifacts of our continent's indigenous cultures, objects of high quality produced within this framework are increasingly difficult to locate for museum collections. It is with great pleasure that the Lowe Art Museum can present such a varied and exceptionally fine selection of one aspect of Indian works. The ultimate credit for such remarkable foresight and pereception in gathering these baskets must go to their collectors: Mr. Alfred I. Barton, Mrs. Whitford Drake, Mrs. V. K. Neaville, and Mrs. Leta Venning.

I am sure I speak for the entire community as I thank each of these collectors for seeing the Lowe Art Museum as final home for the Indians' baskets. We all benefit from witnessing the best of the past.

John J. Baratte
Director

Introduction

Basket making is the process of forming vessels by intertwining a series of fibers, then combining the foundation elements, called warps, and the filling elements, called wefts (or woofs). The four basic techniques of basketry are coiling, twining, wicker and plaiting. The differences between them lie in the way warp and weft are joined.

In the *coiling* technique, the basket has a continuous coil which starts at the bottom center and rises to the outer rim. The coil, or warp, is secured by a single strand of material, the weft, to each successive twist. There are many variations to this way of working.

The *twining* technique involves crossing the vertical warp with the horizontal weft, and binding the two where they cross. The variations to this method are called openwork, twilled or diagonal stitch, wrapped, lattice or tee, and braiding.

In the *wicker* technique, there are only stiff warps and one stiff weft. Here, there is a superficial resemblance to twined work, but wicker may be distinguished from twining by the horizontal position of the stitches on both faces of the basket.

Plaiting shows no differentiation between weft and warp; both strips of material are of equal size and foundation strength. This method is used primarily in mat making.

Basketry in one form or another has existed from coast to coast in North America. As with most Indian art, basketry is the result of a long period of development in which individuals devoted all of their inventive skill to perfecting techniques and styles. Most baskets have conventionalized

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form and the same combination of design occurs over and over again in the same geographical areas with little variation. Art for art's sake is almost unknown, but a sense of fitness and a close relationship between form and function exists. To the American Indian, everything that was made had a function, and in general, there were no artists as such, only craftsmen.

Because of the perishable nature of the materials of the basket, it is difficult to trace the development of the craft. To help clarify stylistic differences, this exhibition is divided into three areas: the midwest and Eastern part of the country, consisting of the Plains area to the Atlantic Ocean; the Southwest area, comprising the present day states of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and southern California; and the Northwest Coast area, from northern California to southern Alaska.

Indian art has always been regional. Each area excelled in particular crafts depending on the materials available and the limitations of the land area where the tribe lived. The arts of each region reflect the mode of life rather than any racial or linguistic heritage.

In general, the design aspects of the regions fall into basic patterns: the Southwest excelled in two dimentional decoration, whereas the eastern area developed a strong three dimentional form and the Northwest developed a more linear form. In some areas, baskets and pottery which were not meant to be seen in motion were decorated with asymmetric or organic designs in order to give them a life of their own. Although most of the designs are symbols, which convey abstract concepts or record facts, much of the decoration does not have any recorded meaning.

This exhibition of American Indian baskets presents a selection of the many fine baskets from the Lowe Art Museum collection. We are particularly indebted to Mr. Alfred I. Barton, whose farsighted collecting has been the nucleus of our primitive art collection, and to Mrs. V. K. Neaville, Mrs. Whitford Drake, and Mrs. Leta Venning who helped make this exhibition possible through their donations.

Carol Hotchkiss
Registrar

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Eastern and Plains

Basket making in this area never reached the heights of sophistication as it did in other areas. Although the history of archeology is oldest in the eastern areas, as they were settled first, less is known about the early inhabitants than in other areas. The climate and mode of life limited the use of basketry, and tended to promote other crafts.

The Algonkin Indians, using birch bark, strove for simplicity and practicality, and favored angular geometric designs and naturalistic motifs. They were well known for their large decorated fiber carrying bags.

In the Plains area, coiled baskets were made for a gambling game which involved the use of dice. These were made by the women only. Many of the tribes around the Great Lakes region fashioned baskets out of willow splints and 'sweet grass' which was then sewn and coiled. Twined baskets were restricted in the eastern area to the salt bottles and tobacco baskets made of corn husk by the New York Iroquois. The most common materials for Eastern and Southern baskets were straw, wood splint, cane and palmetto.

1. **WORK BASKET,** Chocktaw (Oklahoma); plait method, 9″ square; ca. 1920; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
2. **COVERED BASKET,** Chitimacha (Louisiana); plait method, 4″ square; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
3. **WICKER WORK BASKET,** Cherokee (Oklahoma) twine method, 8½″ diameter; 1938; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
4. **BIRCH BARK BOX,** Algonkin (St. Lawrence River, Canada); bark, 6″ diameter; anonymous gift.
5. **BARK BASKET,** Chippewa (Minnesota); bark, 9″h × 18¾″; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. V. K. Neaville.
6. **BASKET,** unknown origin; wicker method, ca. 1920; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
7. **SADDLEBAG,** Plains Indian; twine method, 19″ long; 19th century; gift of Alfred I. Barton.

Southwest

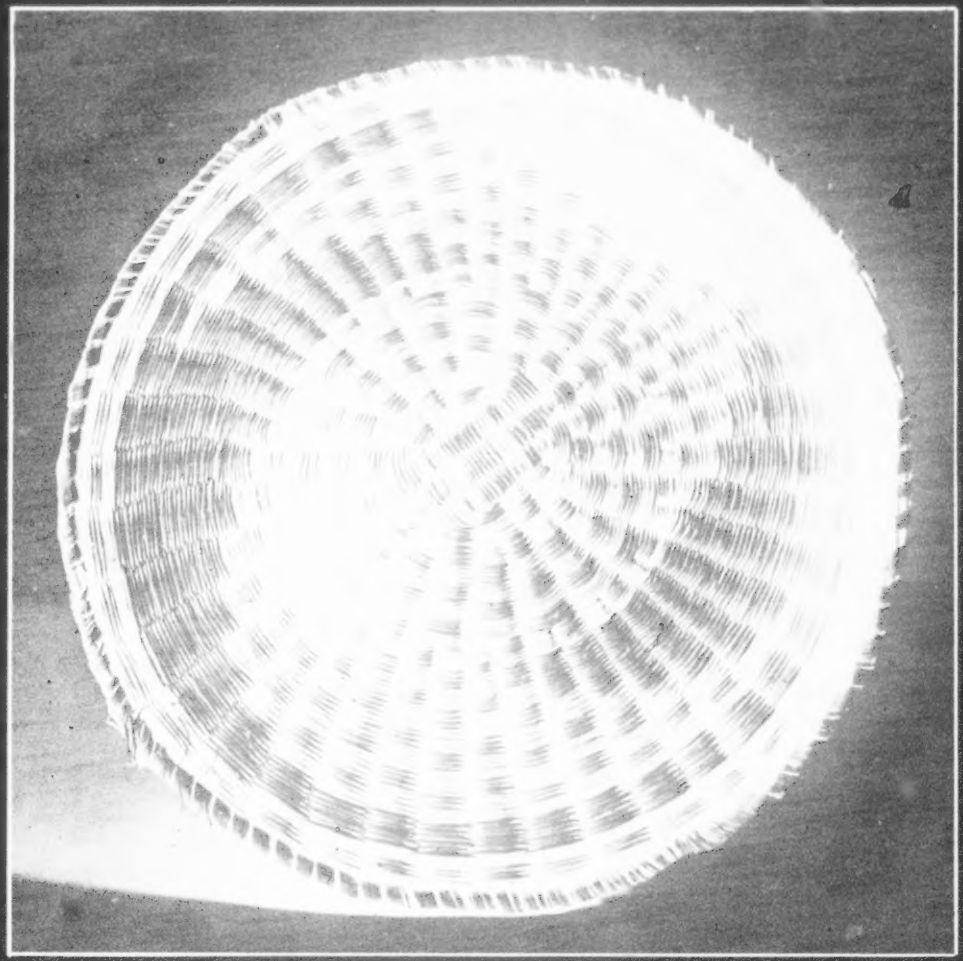
There has been habitation of this area for over 2000 years. One of the earliest cultures was known as the 'basket-makers' which reached its zenith as a civilization in the 14th and 15th century. When pottery was discovered and developed, basketry declined in importance; however, the same design motifs were continued on the clay.

The most common materials for baskets of this area were corn husks, yucca, devil's claw and common grass, and the most common shape is a broad shallow form.

The Pueblo area has had a tradition of sheep raising since the early 1600's, and is best known for its weaving. The mountain area nearby is inhabited by the Apache tribes, and it is there that basketry has flourished. Their shallow broad baskets, usually decorated with whirling patterns, are, along with the baskets of the Pima, some of the finest in the country. Generally, the designs are spatial rather than linear, and often based on the right angle. In the southern part of the area appear organic figures and designs based on the circle.

The Pomo Indians of southern California excell all other tribes in the perfection and technique of their basketry. Decoration of their baskets is based on the triangle. Many are so finely woven that they can hold water.

8. **HOUSEHOLD BOWL,** Mission Basketry (S.W. California); coil method, 6" diameter; ca. late 1800's; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
9. **JAR,** West Apache (Arizona); coil method, 7" diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
10. **MARRIAGE BASKET,** Navajo (Arizona); coil method, 14½" diameter; ca. late 1800's; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
11. **UTILITY BOWL,** West Apache (Central Arizona); coil method, 30" diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
12. **BOWL,** Navajo (Arizona); coil method, 12" diameter; ca. 1850; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
13. **WATER BOTTLE** (unfinished), Paiute (S.W. Utah); twine method, 10½" h; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
14. **'WASTE' BASKET,** Hopi (N.E. Arizona); wicker method, 10" diameter; ca. 1920; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
15. **PLATE,** Hopi (N.E. Arizona); wicker method, 14½" diameter; ca. 1915; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
16. **HOUSEHOLD BOWL,** Mescalero Apache (S.E. Utah); coil method, 17½" diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
17. **COVERED BASKET,** Apache (Arizona); coil method, 11¾" diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Leta Venning.
18. **WOMAN'S SEWING BOX,** (Arizona); plait and loose coil methods, 14½" long; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
19. **BURDEN BASKET,** Apache (Arizona); wicker method, 13½" diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.



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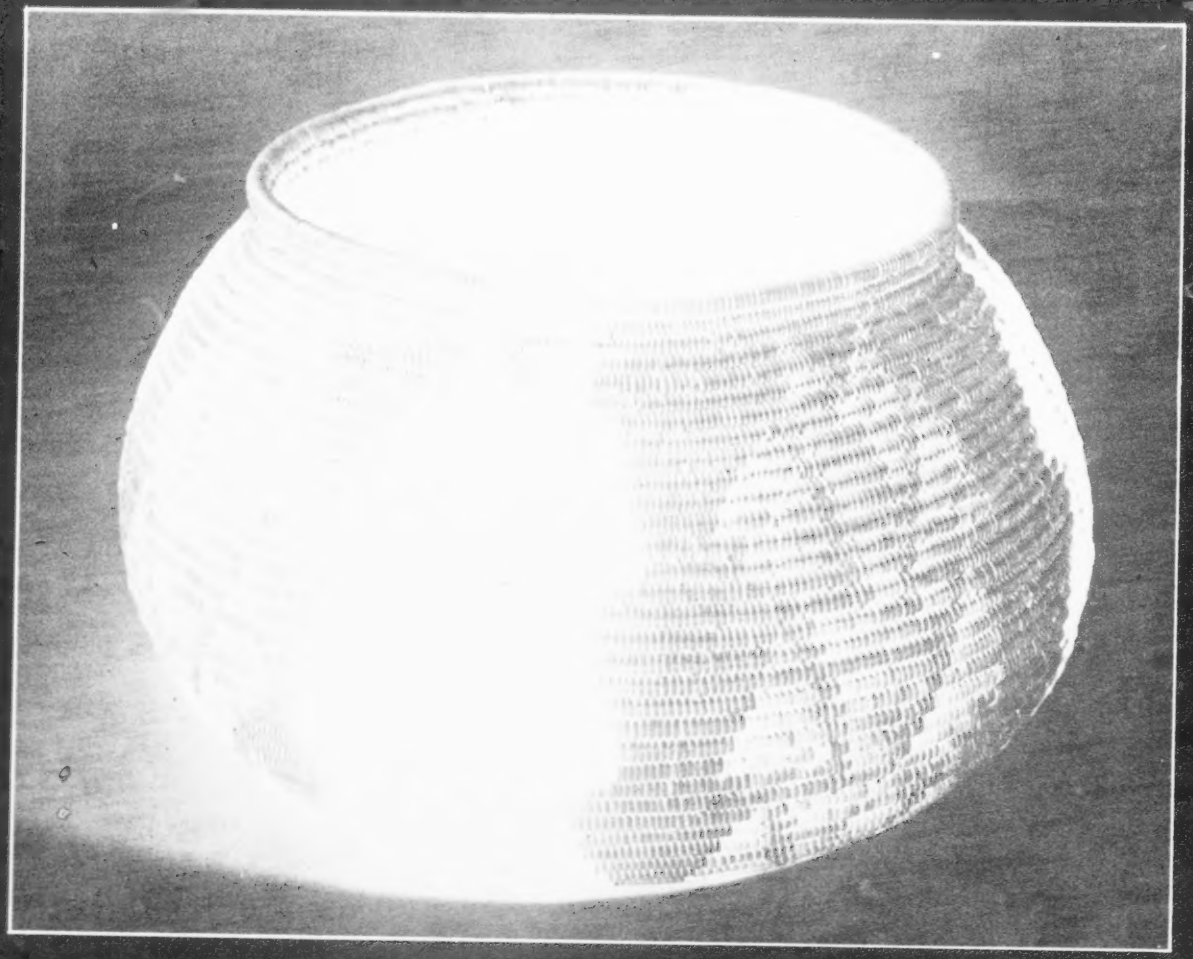

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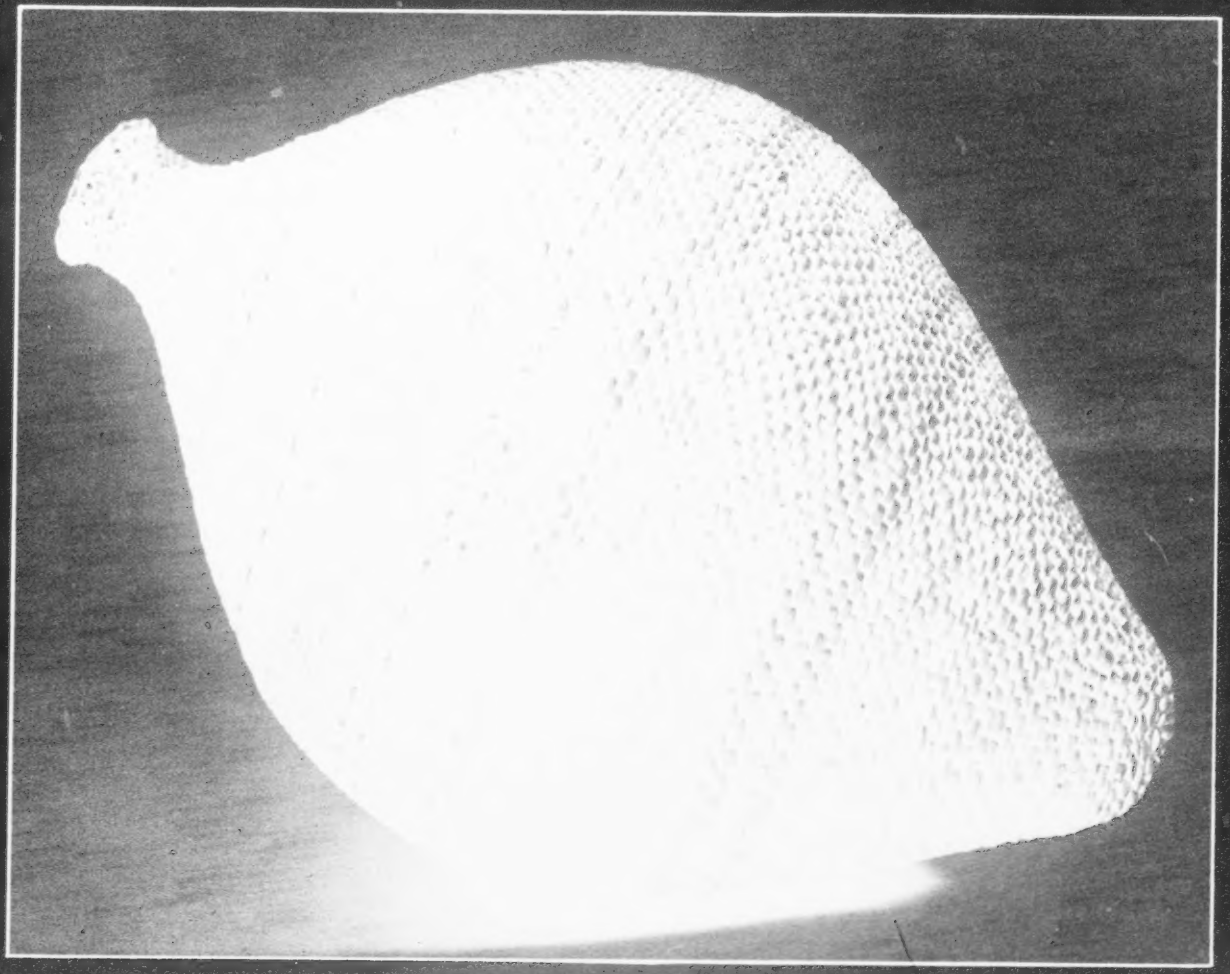

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California and Northwest Coast

The sea and the trees are the foundation of life in this area, and because of the access to the sea, the peoples of the Northwest became the greatest woodworkers and navigators of all the American Indian tribes. The women of the area wove baskets from the red cedar tree—that never ending source of houses, totem poles, masks and dishes. The men designed the baskets, as no woman was allowed to create designs involving life forms.

The highest form of the craft was reached in California where baskets were made from pin size up to twelve feet in diameter. Stitches on the baskets can be as many as 60 to the inch, and dozens of leaves, roots, stems and barks were used. Some of the native vegetation used was black fern root, red bud, yucca, white willow, tule root and brown marsh grass. Beads and feathers often decorated the baskets, and the indians even cooked with them, by dropping red hot stones into a watertight basket.

Two kinds of techniques were used: in the northern quarter of the area, twining was prevalent, and in the remainder of the area coiling was used. Designs were usually based on the triangle, and the most common colors for decoration were red and black. Only in the southern areas was red yarn included as trim. Baskets from the S.W. corner of California can be recognized by their glossy, mottled yellow-brown background.

20. **BERRY BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 6″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
21. **BERRY BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 9¾″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
22. **BERRY BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 11″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
23. **TRINKET BASKET,** Hupa (N.W. California); twine method, 8″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
24. **TWINED BOX,** Aluet (Attu Island); twine method, 5½″ diameter; late 1800's; gift of Alfred I. Barton.
25. **BASKET,** Aluet (Attu Island); twine method, 9½″ diameter; 19th century; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
26. **SQUARE BOX WITH LID,** Makah (Washington); plaited bottom, wicker and twine methods, 2½″ diameter; 19th century; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
27. **BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine and plait methods, 2½″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
28. **BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 2½″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
29. **BERRY BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 5″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
30. **ALARM BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 4¼″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.

31. **ALARM BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine and plait methods, 4½″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
32. **ALARM BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 5″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
33. **ALARM BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); plait and twine methods, 7½″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
34. **BERRY BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 9″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
35. **ALARM BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 7¼″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
36. **BERRY BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 10″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
37. **ALARM BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 7¼″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
38. **WOVEN BASKET,** Northwest Coast; twine and coil methods, 6″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.
39. **COVERED BASKET,** Tlingit (S.E. Alaska); twine method, 6″ diameter; ca. 1900; anonymous gift.
40. **COVERED BASKET,** Attu Island; twine method, 12″ diameter; ca. 1900; gift of Mrs. Whitford Drake.

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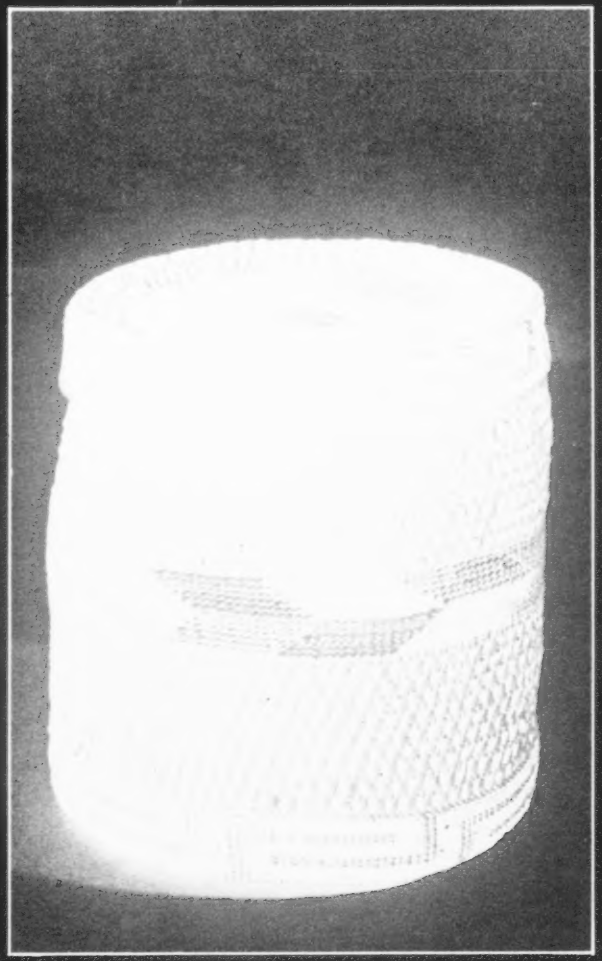

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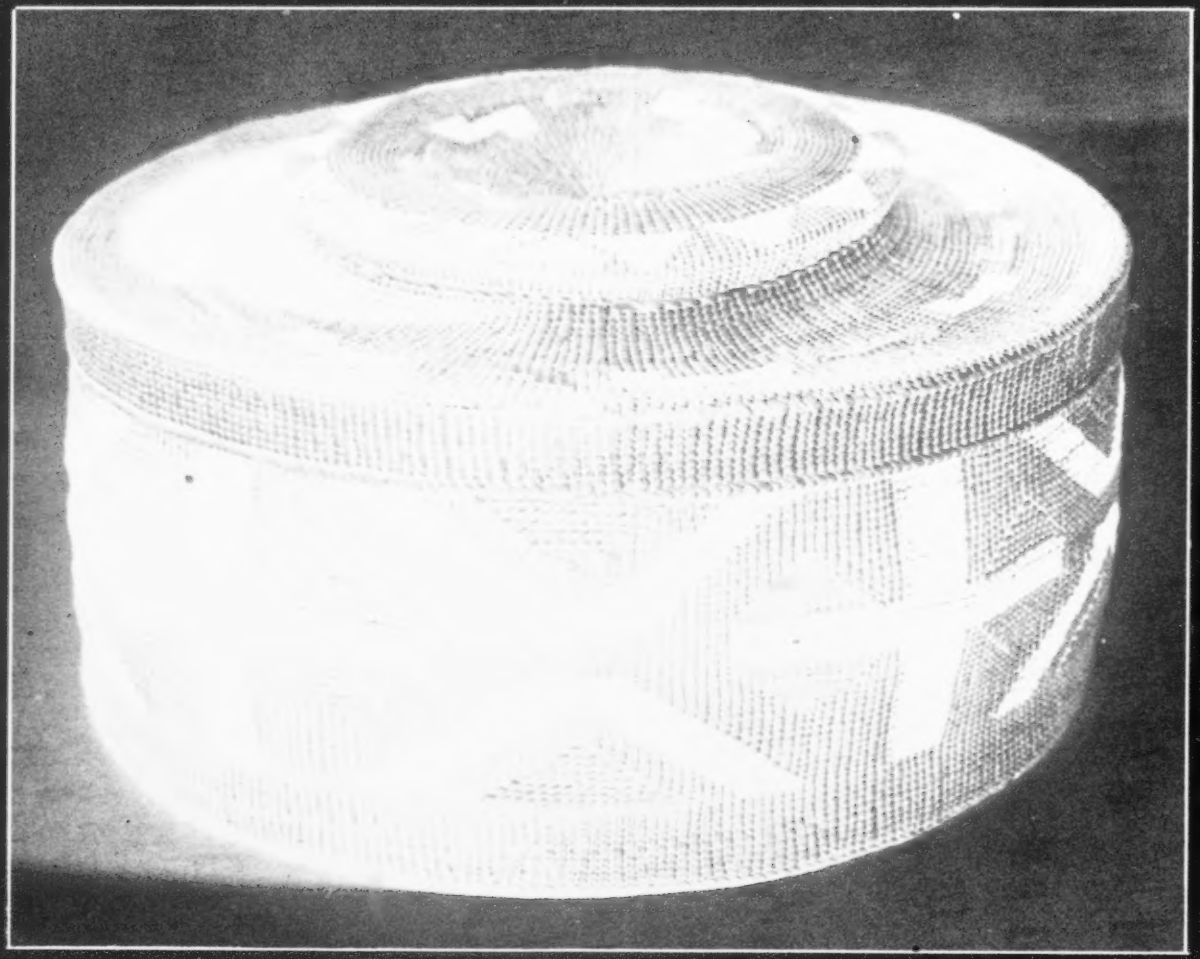

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